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UNCLAS COLOMBO 000126

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

FOR DS/IP/SA, DS/IP/SPC/CCBC, DS/OP/SPC/WMD, M/MED AND  
SA/INS  
New Delhi for RMO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [AMED](#) [PTER](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SUSPICIOUS WHITE POWDER AT AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

Sensitive but unclassified - protect accordingly.

1. (SBU) During the late afternoon hours on January 21, our Protocol FSN employee opened a locally-delivered letter at her desk. Upon looking into the envelope, the employee noticed an unidentified white powder substance. The employee contacted RSO. Upon arrival, RSO turned off the office's air vent, inspected the office and determined that the substance did not appear to be spilled. The employee was sent to get cleaned-up. RSO wearing appropriate protective gear retrieved the envelope and locked the office. Without removal of the letter, the envelope was further inspected by RSO in our off-site mail handling room. Inspection revealed that the envelope contained a handwritten threat letter and a white powder substance the consistency of the flour. The envelope and letter were triple-sealed in zip-lock bags and secured in the off-site facility. The following morning (1/22/03) the package was delivered to Sri Lanka Medical Research Institute for analysis.

2. (SBU) Also on January 22, a second powder-filled envelope was intercepted in our off-site mailroom. This envelope displayed the return address for the Sri Lanka Finance Minister. The envelope was sealed in zip-lock bags and released to the Sri Lanka Police for investigation. We do not of course believe the envelope came from the Finance Minister, but because it listed the Minister by name and address, the matter was referred directly to the police.

3. (SBU) Post treats all white powder incidents seriously, but also suspects the testing will determine the white powder substance is benign. RSO is attempting to determine how the first letter got past the off-site mail screening process, but has in the meantime reissued instructions about appropriate mail handling procedures.

AMSELEM